

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, NL

SUBJ: DUTCH CABINET IN TURMOIL AGAIN

1. IN AN INTERVIEW WITH STATE SECRETARY FOR JUSTICE GLASTRA VAN LOON IN THE DUTCH WEEKLY "VRIJ NEDERLAND" ON MAY 17 HAS STIRRED A MINOR STORM IN LOCAL POLITICS AND STRAINED INTERNAL CABINET RELATIONS. THE STATE SECRETARY, WHO HAS RESPONSIBILITY FOR PENAL MATTERS, SHARPLY CRITICIZED THE SECRETARY-GENERAL IN THE JUSTICE MINISTRY AS BEING UNRESPONSIVE TO NEEDED CHANGES IN THE DUTCH PRISON SYSTEM, AND IN BLOCKING THE FLOW OF INFORMATION IN THE MINISTRY. TO DATE, NO ONE HAS QUESTIONED THE SECRETARY'S ANALYSIS OF THE "CRISIS" IN THE DUTCH PENAL SYSTEM, ONLY HIS PUBLIC CRITICISM OF A SUBORDINATE.

2. EVEN THOUGH THE STATE SECRETARY HAS OFFERED A PUBLIC APOLOGY FOR HIS CRITICISM OF THE TOP RANKING CIVIL SERVANT IN THE MINISTRY, JUSTICE MINISTER VAN AGT HAS CALLED FOR GLASTRA VAN LOON'S RESIGNATION. NO DECISION HAS BEEN TAKEN THUS FAR, BUT THE IMPASSE IS EXPECTED TO BE BROKEN MAY 23 WHEN PRIMIN DEN UYL RETURNS FROM SURINAM FOR THE WEEKLY CABINET MEETING.

3. WHILE THE ISSUE IS A MINOR ONE, EVEN BY DUTCH POLITICAL STANDARDS, TEMPERS HAVE HEATED UP OUT OF ALL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PROPORTION TO THE QUESTION OF THE IMPROPRIETY OF A

CABINET OFFICIAL CRITICIZING ONE OF HIS CIVIL SERVANTS IN PUBLIC. IF GLASTRA VAN LOON IS FORCED TO RESIGN, THE OTHER THREE D'66 CABINET MEMBERS (HOUSING MINISTER GRUYTERS, STATE SEC FOR FINANCE DE GOEDE, AND STATE SEC FOR FORN AFFS, BRINKHORST) MAY CHOOSE TO GO WITH HIM. ALTHOUGH THAT WOULD NOT NECESSARILY BRING DOWN THE DEN UYL CABINET, IT WOULD COMPLICATE MATTERS GREATLY FOR THE COALITION.

4. WE EXPECT DEN UYL TO SMOOTH THIS AFFAIR OVER AS HE HAS WITH MANY OTHER MORE SERIOUS POSSIBLE SPLITS IN HIS GOVERNMENT. HE IS, HOWEVER, BEING CALLED UPON MORE AND MORE TO HOLD TOGETHER A RESTLESS COALITION. MOST OBSERVERS STILL EXPECT THE DEN UYL GOVERNMENT TO SERVE OUT ITS FULL TERM OF OFFICE, BUT THERE IS ALWAYS THE POSSIBILITY THAT EVEN A MINOR AGGRAVATION SUCH AS THIS CURRENT ONE WILL PROVE TO BE THE LAST STRAW.
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